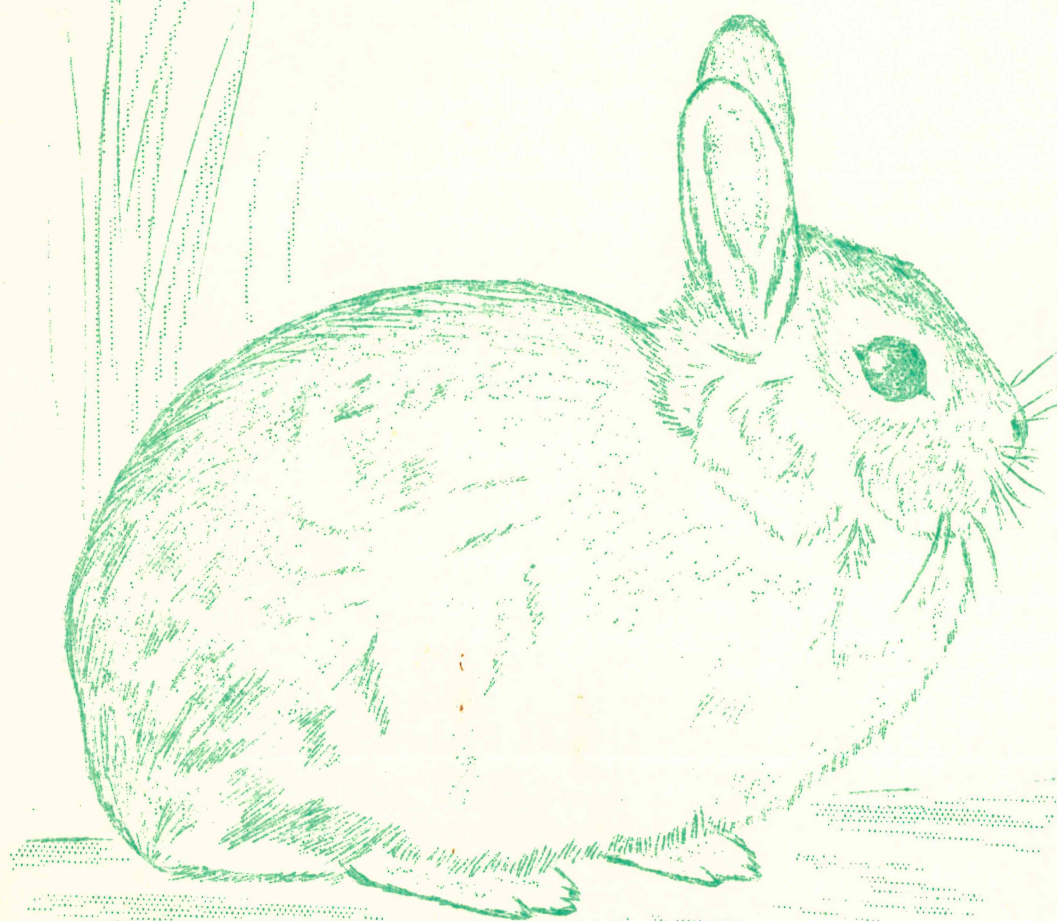


NATURE NOTES



VOL. I NO. 12

AUGUST 1965

VOL. II NO. 1

SEPTEMBER 1965

"NATURE NOTES"

is published by

The Thames Science Center , Inc.

Director & Editor : Roy A. Kennan

It is the purpose of this bulletin, sent free of charge to members of the Thames Science Center, to report on activities at the Center both in months just past and in the months to come, to welcome new members to the organization and to offer informational articles in the field of Natural Science.

CONTENTS

AUGUST - SEPTEMBER 1965

A Reminder	Page 1
Newsletter.....	Page 2
Activites Calendar for October.....	Page 3
PSWS Fall Bird Migration Field Trips....	Page 4
Volunteers.....	Page 5
NATURE NOTE : The Cottontail Rabbit....	Page 6
(See Ed. note , pg. 7)	

A Reminder

It may seem a little premature to be thinking of Christmas, but I'm taking this opportunity to remind you that Christmas Bazaar time will be here before you know it. Now is the time of year that many mothers are canning and making jellies, jams and other preserves...home grown produce is one of the popular items at our Bazaar.

The Bazaar will be our one fund-raising event for 1965 and we need everyone's help to make it a success. If you have a surplus of home-canned items, or of anything else that you think would be well-received at the Bazaar, won't you please set them aside for now.... and stay "tuned" to Nature Notes. In the next issue we'll have specific information on where to bring them, or who to call to have them picked up.

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
AUGUST - SEPTEMBER 1965

Hello There !

The most important means we at the Center have of serving our membership is through the program we offer...and the advance notice of it that Nature Notes gives you. Now that our total membership is over 375 we are at the point where advance notice is getting to be a real privilege. With the three classes we are offering in October we will only be able to handle a total of 34 students...I feel sure that we will be turning members away because the classes are full as soon as the publicity hits the press. This is good for those that can get in the classes, but disappointing for those left out. If YOU want to be in...register by telephone as soon as possible!

Field trips are fun, and they can be educational too, especially if you listen to those who know...we'll make a stab at pointing this out on October 9th with our first competitive field trip. If this is successful we'll have more...(Incidentally, your Director tries to go on all of the PSWS Saturday morning field trips to learn..no prizes there, but quite a collection of knowledgeable people!)

Thinking back to Herb Moran's visit with zoo animals in April, I expect to see the Center bulging at the seams on the 17th of October when we are visited by monkeys and their owners. There will be several kinds of monkey pets shown and compared...and perhaps even held, if you're lucky!

The PSWS trip to Hawk Mountain isn't exactly in our back yard, but for those who can make it, what a wonderful chance to see more hawks and eagles than you'd be apt to see anywhere else in the country! Also, this is Curator Maurice Braun's work for the last twenty years or more...who could be more competent to teach us about the predaceous birds?

This is the month that many of our memberships expire...if your mailing label doesn't have an expiration date in the lower right hand corner, you are about to become an ex-member! Please renew promptly so that we can continue to grow....

The Center will be closed to the public from September 18 - 23, allowing the Director a short vacation before the Fall classes start. For that reason there are two phone numbers to call for class reservations. Mrs. Frank Bucko Jr. is serving the Center as a part time secretary now, and she'll answer your questions there mornings, while Mrs. Kashanski has offered her phone number for afternoons until we are open on the 24th.....

Well, I'm off to relax a bit...see you soon....

Roy Q. Kennan

ACTIVITIES CALENDAR - OCTOBER 1965

26	27	28	29	30	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

CLASSES

The three classes offered in October will all meet from 3:30 to 5:00 P.M., starting at the Center and going their various ways for four weekly field trips each. The theme of this session will be Variety in Nature. Tuition for members will be \$2.00, non-members \$5.00, or with a new membership \$4.00. Please telephone your class reservation to the Science Center as soon as possible. Call 443-4295 between 9 A.M. and Noon or call 443-4224 between 1 P.M. and 5 P.M. Reservations close September 28th.

Class I - 1st & 2nd graders, limited to ten students.

This class will start Thursday, Sep. 30, and will be under the able direction of Mrs. John Merrill of Waterford. Mrs. Merrill drove for the Summer Program, where her talent and extensive knowledge of the outdoors was discovered. We are most fortunate to have her join our volunteer teaching staff.

Class II - 3rd, 4th & 5th graders, limited to twelve students.

Starting Wednesdays, Sep. 29, another new teacher, Mrs. Peter Stockman of Norwich, will be taking her class outdoors for hiking and learning. As a change from the usual field trip fare Mrs. Stockman has planned art work and a scavenger hunt as parts of her program...this should be lots of fun!

Class III - 6th, 7th & 8th graders, limited to twelve students.

The Director will lead this one, meeting Friday - Oct. 1- for the first session. We'll make our trips as varied in habitat as possible and plan to include some competition (with small prizes) as an added stimulus to learning in the field.

FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, October 9, 2 P.M. at the Science Center.

This will be a competitive field trip for 3rd to 5th graders, with no limit on the number participating. We'll take a walk out the trail behind the Center going to the Arboretum, learning the names of various plants and trees as we go. On the return trip each person will have a sheet of paper on which to fill in the names of numbered plants along the trail. A prize will be given to the one naming the most correctly. No fee for this trip.

○ Sunday, October 10, 2 P.M. at Harkness Park

This trip, limited to fifteen 4th to 6th graders, will leave for Harkness Park at 1:30 P.M. for a guided botanical tour of the park. Our guide will be Mr. Arthur Manthorne, a member of the State Ranger complement at the park, who has among other things been a guide at the Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary in Florida's Everglades. With the variety of plants and habitats found at Harkness I'm sure Mr. Manthorne will give us a very interesting tour. No fee for this, but telephone your reservation please. Also, we will need drivers...

○ Saturday, October 16, 10 A.M. at the Science Center

This trip will go by auto to visit the largest White Oak in the northeast part of the country, the Larrabee Oak in Ledyard. Estimated to be 300 years or more old, this huge tree has branches bigger than most trees found in the area. Mrs. Kashanski will be our guide for this trip. No fee, age limit or reservation needed... but please be prompt.

DEMONSTRATION - LECTURE



Sunday, October 17, 2 P.M. at the Center

On this Sunday afternoon we are going to have a visit from a group of ...monkeys! Mrs. Perkins of Avery's Pet Store in New London, together with several monkey-owning friends, is going to show and tell us more about these little almost-human animals. There'll be no age limit for this visit, but come early to get a seat...we should really be crowded for this visit!

FILM



Thursday, October 7, 8 P.M. at Pequot-sepos Wildlife Sanctuary

A film in color, entitled "Wilderness Alps of Stemetkin" will run 30 minutes and be followed by a question period. To see the "spectacular and breath-taking beauty of the mountain wonderland of north-central Washington" PSWS is charging 25¢ for non-member children and 50¢ for non-member adults.

PSWS Fall Bird Migration Field Trips

○ A series of Saturday morning bird watching trips that leave the PSWS parking lot at 6:30 A.M. or meet at the starting points at 7:00 A.M....no fees, all that are needed is binoculars or a 'scope and early rising...

Sep. 25.....Barn Island
October 2.....Harkness Park
October 9.....Napatree Point
October 23.....Harkness Park
October 30.....Napatree Point

For directions and further information on these trips, call the Pequot-sepos Wildlife Sanctuary in Mystic, 536-9777 between 10:30 A.M. & 5 P.M., Tues. thru Sun.



October 15 - 17 at the Hawk Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary, Penna.

This field trip will leave independantly the 15th, go up the mountain Saturday, spending the day, and return Sunday. Call the Sanctuary to make reservations for a chance to look down on eagles

V O L U N T E E R S

The Thames Science Center is growing, and one of the symptoms of that growth is growing pains. We have doubled our membership in the last year and now need to offer more things to more people. As most of you realise, the technical staff at the Center consists of just one person...the Director. He is guided by a Board of Directors numbering twenty persons, but due to the fact that these are busy people, aiding the Science Center in a volunteer teacher capacity is out of the question for most of them.

There is, however, another pool of resources that hasn't been tapped very deeply in recent months, and this is a plea to you.... members and parents of members of the Science Center. It may seem paradoxical to ask you to pay for a membership and then ask you to work as a volunteer, but as long as the Center is at the stage where it can afford only one paid worker it is his job to find a lot of helpers so that we can expand our program. The improved program is the means of adding members, and eventually we'll get to the point where an addition to the staff will be possible.

Other than the financial consideration, let me remind you that anything you do for the Center is being done for our community children and is therefore a community service. We at the Science Center are in the position of being able to offer local children a new outlook on the out of doors... a closer look than public school teachers, with their crowded classrooms and busy schedules, can hope to give. In order to accomplish this we keep classes to fifteen or less; with volunteer drivers and teachers this brings the supervisor : student ratio down to 1 : 8 or even less.

If we are to increase the amount and frequency of our program this Fall we must have a steady flow of volunteer drivers for field trips and volunteer teachers and lecturers to conduct them. If you have ever taught, if you have a station wagon and would like to fill it with kids and head out into the country and learn, if you have colored slides or movies of any aspect of Nature that you are proud of, if your hobby interest lies anywhere in the vast field of nature, if you have unusual and interesting pets, if you have any ideas as to nature crafts...LET US KNOW ABOUT IT! Anything you do for the Center will be gratefully received, and if past experience is any guide, you'll come away from it feeling well rewarded.

If you feel that there is anything that you would like to do to help out, please call the Thames Science Center and let us know about it... Office hours are 9 A.M. to Noon, Tuesday thru Friday, and we are open to the public 1 P.M. to 5 P.M. Tuesday thru Sunday.

NATURE NOTE - AUGUST & SEPTEMBER 1965

The Cottontail Rabbit

(Reprinted from the Conn. Wildlife Conservation Bulletin, Jan-Feb 1965)

One of the most abundant and widespread of game animals, the cottontail leads a life filled with hazard. Its enemies include all of the meat eating animals, from man to the weasel, birds of prey and the red squirrels, crows, rats and snakes which relentlessly search out the defenseless nestlings. Add to these the vagaries of weather which can wipe out an entire family by a prolonged downpour or late freeze and it is easy to understand why this animal, which usually produces five young per litter and may bear three or four litters per year, does not have the countryside shoulder-high in rabbits at the end of five years.

Were it not for the checks imposed by nature, a single pair of rabbits could produce 20 young per year ; unchecked these 20 young and their parents could produce 220 young the following year. At the end of five years, if no casualties occurred, the original pair could have progeny numbering three hundred and twenty two thousand! So although nature's method seems cruel, it is both the means by which other animals obtain their livelihood and for insuring that only the fit, strong and keen will survive to perpetuate the species.

Family Life

Young are produced from April through mid-September. The gestation period is about 28 days and females may mate within a day following the birth of young. Generally the young of the first litter stand the best chance of survival, unless they are killed by an early hard frost. The young born in mid-summer arrive at a time when all creatures of the wild are in search of food to strengthen their families, and the small rabbits, making up a large portion of this fare, are in great demand. Those born from mid-August on do not have time to build the stamina to withstand the rigors of winter and are among the first to fall prey to winter marauders.

The nest of the rabbit is often found in an open field, although it may be located in a brush thicket, an old pasture, or between the roots of a tree. The female selects or scoops out a shallow depression, six inches long and five inches wide, which she lines with fine grass plucked nearby and with fur pulled from her abdomen. The nest is built a few days before the young are expected and is ignored until the babies are born. As the home range of the cottontail is quite small, usually not exceeding three acres, the female is never very far from this nest. When the young are born they are taken to the prepared cradle of grass and fur where the mother tends them during the night. During the daylight hours the female lies quietly nearby, watching her young to see that no danger befalls them, but rarely betrays them by her presence.

The babies are blind, naked and deaf at birth. A light fuzz envelops the body within a day and at the end of the first week the color pattern of a respectable fur coat has been produced. The eyes begin to open between the sixth and eighth day, with the ears developing their rigidity and strength concurrently. Between the tenth and twelfth day the young begin to leave the nest and eat greens. At the end of two weeks, having obtained a weight of about one-third of a pound, they leave the nest forever, but remain in the vicinity until after the birth of the next litter and then slowly disperse to take up their own separate range.

Den and Diet

During the day the rabbit stays quietly in his form, which is the rabbit equivalent of a den. The form is a resting place about six inches wide and ten inches long, canopied by grass and shrubbery which enclose the light depression made by the weight of the animal as it reposes in this favorite spot, day after day. The form is generally placed on a slight elevation which affords the rabbit an outlook over his home range and also provides drainage. There may be more than one form per territory but usually one is favored.

Rabbits consume a greater variety of vegetable food than any other North American mammal. Almost one-half of the food consists of grasses and sedges; other foods are herbaceous plants, succulent leaves and fruits and, at the bottom of the list, bark and twigs. During the winter the latter become the dominant foods.

Two Species

In Connecticut we have two species of cottontail. Externally they are very similar. The Eastern cottontail (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) is the grayer of the two, the grayness being most prominent on the rump and the leading edges of the ears. The ears of this species are lightly veined and sparsely furred. The tiny white "star", numbering from four to five hairs to a pronounced white spot, is present upon the forehead of about 50% of the Eastern cottontails. This star reportedly never occurs on the forehead of the New England cottontail (*Sylvilagus transitionalis*), which sports a reddish brown coat, penciled with black; has heavily veined ears margined with black and a little more heavily furred on the inner side than those of its cousin. These pelage (Ed. pelage = FUR) characteristics are uncertain means of identification since a certain amount of overlap occurs. Skeletal differences are used by the trained worker to differentiate between the two species.

(Ed. Note : Not only this fine article, but also the cover drawing were taken from the Connecticut Wildlife Conservation Bulletin, published bi-monthly by the Board of Fisheries and Game, Hartford, and available for a subscription fee of 50¢ per year. Write to the State Office Building, Hartford, Conn. for a subscription.)

THAMES SCIENCE CENTER
622 Williams Street
New London, Conn. 06320

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U. S. Postage
P A I D
Quaker Hill , Conn.
Permit No. 9

The Kashanski Family
74 Oil Mill Rd.
Waterford, Conn.